

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2545, TFLE01: PM SINIORA HOLDS FAST ON SHEBA'A, INSISTS

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BEIRUT2545**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2545	2006-08-07 06:59	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Beirut

Appears in these articles:

[not](#)
[yet](#)
[set](#)

VZCZCXRO2083
OO RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHLB #2545/01 2190659
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 070659Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4923
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0028
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 002545

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/05/2016
TAGS: [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: TFLE01: PM SINIORA HOLDS FAST ON SHEBA'A, INSISTS THAT LAF (ASSISTED BY UNIFIL) IS UP TO THE TASK

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

SUMMARY

1. (C/NF) A/S Welch's second meeting with PM Siniora in 24 hours clarified Lebanon's preferred sequence of events at cease-fire. But the Prime Minister would not budge from his "requirement" that the IDF withdraw from all Lebanese territory, including Sheba'a. Siniora argued hard that unless the Israeli occupation of Sheba'a ends -- even if the initial transfer into UN custodianship extends into years -- the conflict will continue. He flatly stated, "there will be no deal without Sheba'a." Siniora also urged the U.S. not to allow Syria into the Sheba'a equation by forcing the issue of "border delineation" into the agreement. PM Siniora defended the adequacy of deploying LAF into the south at the time of the cease-fire, as long as the LAF was assisted at first by an augmented UNIFIL, and later by a multi-national stabilization force. Concerning the immediate deployment of LAF to the south, Siniora said Minister of Defense Murr had confirmed the army would be ready to move early next week. And he reiterated his claim that a mission-capable element of several hundred foreign troops would also be ready to deploy within days of the cease-fire. As the meeting concluded, Siniora produced a map that showed relatively conservative boundaries for what Lebanon considers Sheba'a in an attempt to demonstrate the reasonableness of their demands. PM Siniora also commented in passing on the kidnapped IDF soldiers. End summary.

2. (SBU) A/S Welch and the Ambassador met with PM Fouad Siniora for nearly two hours at the Grand Serail early in the afternoon of August 5. As with the previous day's meeting, senior Siniora advisors Mohammad Chattah and Rola Nouraddine attended the meeting, as did poloff (notetaker) and Jonathan Schwartz from L. The meeting took place immediately following the Assistant Secretary's meeting with Speaker Nabih Berri.

3. (C/NF) PM Siniora expressed keen interest in the reaction of Speaker Berri to the US/FR proposals presented by the Assistant Secretary earlier in the day. When informed that Berri was engaged, professional, and had even indicated some flexibility on timing with regards to Sheba'a, Siniora expressed relief that Berri was still on board with the 7-point approach.

BOILS DOWN TO TWO ISSUES

4. (C/NF) Although he professed that each of the 7 points dealt with an important cause of the current hostilities, PM Siniora stated that the negotiations would go nowhere unless his Government could achieve two unalterable goals: the "immediate" withdrawal of IDF forces south of the Blue Line upon cease-fire, and a firm commitment on Sheba'a that would remove Israeli presence.

INSISTS LAF IS READY TO MOVE
15,000 TROOPS SOUTH

5. (C/NF) PM Siniora stated that his Minister of Defense, Elias Murr, had assured him that 15,000 LAF troops would be ready to deploy to the south in a "matter of days." Murr had assured the Prime Minister that the army was united and the officer corps ready to (finally) fulfill their constitutional responsibility. Siniora countered some skepticism by insisting that the LAF was not the "ragtag" outfit some experts have alleged. According to Siniora, the principal reason it had never moved south was political, specifically Syrian interests during the Syrian occupation, and since then, the political leverage of Hizballah.

¶6. (C/NF) Concerning his proposal that an "augment force" of several hundred mission-capable troops would strengthen UNIFIL, which would be assisting the deployment of the LAF, Siniora said he has already been in touch with the Governments of Malaysia and Indonesia, in addition to Turkey. He believes he has their commitment to send troops for a short-term mission. But he also acknowledged that the presence of "non-Muslim" contingents (he mentioned Spain, Italy, and even Russia) would be of great value -- especially as the Muslim contributors would be from Sunni countries, and

BEIRUT 00002545 002 OF 003

the area of deployment was largely Shia. His immediate objective is to win commitments for approximately 2,000 mission-capable troops to augment UNIFIL.

¶7. (C/NF) In response to an inquiry on whether Hizballah would simply move aside as the combined LAF/UNIFIL force moved in, PM Siniora pointed to Amal leader Nabih Berri's recent statement that he would be "riding in the first military vehicle" into the south, implying Berri would never stick out his neck so far without knowing Hizballah's actual intentions.

SHEBA'A FARMS REDUX

¶8. (C/NF) Following a review of Israeli concerns with including Sheba'a in the cease-fire agreement, PM Siniora paused for effect, and then stated flatly that without Sheba'a there would be no deal. He characterized the Israeli position as being close to blackmail and then emotionally declared that the Government of Israel "could bomb Lebanon for another month" if it refused to deal with the disputed territory.

¶9. (C/NF) Each time the Assistant Secretary posed a possible alternative treatment of the Sheba'a issue, the Prime Minister grew impatient and somewhat agitated. He insisted the "international community is getting what it wanted (presumably referring to UNSCR 1559) at a heavy cost to the people of Lebanon." He argued that every party came out ahead: the international community with a stable, democratic Lebanon; the pro-reform people of Lebanon received a disarmed Hizballah -- and the people of Israel a northern border at peace. He completed his exposition with the charge that if the Government of Israel does not leave Sheba'a now (initially turning it over to the UN, per his 7-point plan), it would never do so.

¶10. (C/NF) Following his somewhat emotional argument, Siniora fell back into an appeal to the U.S. and the international community not to allow Syria (and Iran) back into a controlling position in Lebanon. He maintained that if Sheba'a continues to remain in Israeli hands, Syria will always control the situation. He continued that if the international community put the land into the care of the UN, Syria would have to behave in a responsible manner -- it could no longer point to Israeli "occupation." Obliquely referring to the inevitable moment when the international community loses interest in Lebanon, the Prime Minister warned, "If you leave Lebanon in the claws of Syria, eventually it will crush us."

THE ILLEGALITY OF HIZBALLAH'S ARMS

¶11. (C/NF) Concerning the critical element of Hizballah's arms after the cease-fire, PM Siniora said that if the agreement was drafted in accordance with the 7 points, only the arms of the Government of Lebanon (LAF) or those it authorized (UNIFIL and the multi-national stabilization force) would be permitted in the south -- all other weapons would be "illegal."

¶12. (C/NF) When asked why should this give the Government of Israel any confidence -- indeed, what was different? --

Siniora responded that the war had changed everything: the Lebanese people were now filled with "bitterness" and would not permit a return to the status quo, the international community was responding with a powerful stabilization force, and the cease-fire agreement would be perceived as comprehensive and just. Siniora implored that the time was finally right, like a "hammer hitting hot, malleable metal."

COMMENTS ON IDF PRISONERS

¶13. (C/NF) Although PM Siniora stated unequivocally he did not know where the two abducted IDF soldiers were, he realized that it was very important to establish whether they were alive. He acknowledged that on July 12, he had heard what he considered credible information that they "were out of the south" -- but that was the last word he had heard. PM Siniora promised to ask (presumably Nabih Berri, who in turn would have to ask others) about their condition.

BEIRUT 00002545 003 OF 003

¶14. (U) This cable was cleared by A/S Welch.
FELTMAN